

Recent NIH Report Outlines Disturbing Advancement of Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria

WASHINGTON- Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Rules, today responded to a recent National Institute of Health report on the spread and containment of ‘superbugs’ by calling on the federal government to take strong steps to prevent the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria.

“We must do everything possible to stop superbugs from developing in the first place,” Slaughter said. “The good folks at NIH did everything they could to prevent the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and it still wasn’t enough. I can’t think of a clearer case for preventing the overuse of antibiotics and preserving medicine for the protection of human health. What we have here is a canary in the coal mine.”

Yesterday, NIH researchers published an article in the scientific journal Science Translational Medicine, entitled “Tracking a Hospital Outbreak of Carbapenem-Resistant *Klebsiella pneumoniae* with Whole-Genome Sequencing.” The research focused on the containment efforts and eventual spread of a strain of antibiotic-resistant bacteria at the NIH Clinical Center in 2011 that affected 18 patients, six of which ultimately died as a result of the bacteria. The outbreak was finally contained and resulted in new insights on how to improve preventive measures and tracking the origin of an outbreak.

“The FDA could learn a thing or two from the researchers at NIH, and start taking the prevalence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria seriously,” said Slaughter. “For over 35 years the FDA has failed to act on an overabundance of scientific evidence that superbugs can be linked to the overuse of antibiotics in farm animals. The American people are increasingly concerned about the spread of superbugs and rightfully demand federal action on this looming public health crisis.”

Slaughter continues to urge the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to protect the health of the American people by following a U.S. District Court order to reconsider citizen petitions to implement a 35-year old proposal limiting the overuse of certain types of antibiotics in agriculture. The court’s ruling found the FDA’s denial of the petitions “arbitrary and capricious.” In 1977, the FDA proposed withdrawing approval for certain antibiotics used in livestock feed due to the scientific evidence indicating that feeding these antibiotics to animals for purposes other than disease treatment creates an unacceptable risk to the public. To this day, the FDA refuses to limit the use of these antibiotics in agriculture. ([More here](#))

Slaughter is the only microbiologist in Congress. Since 2007, she has been the author of legislation titled the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), designed to ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of humans and curb the growing threat of superbugs. More information on PAMTA, including a list of the more than 300 organizations who have endorsed Slaughter’s legislation [is available here](#).

Every year, more than 100,000 Americans die from bacterial infections acquired in hospitals.

Seventy percent of these infections are resistant to drugs commonly used to treat them. According to the World Health Organization, scientific studies have shown that antibiotic use in animals results in "infections that would not have otherwise occurred, increased frequency of treatment failures (in some cases death) and increased severity of infections." ([More here](#))

Americans are increasingly concerned about antibiotic-resistant bacteria. A June poll by Consumer Reports found that 72-percent of Americans were “extremely or very concerned” about the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The report also found that 86 percent of consumers indicated that meat raised without antibiotics should be available in their local supermarket. ([More here](#))

Slaughter conducted a survey regarding the routine use of antibiotics in food animals and released its findings this July. The survey found that while a small number of industry leaders provide antibiotic-free meat and poultry products, an overwhelming majority of food production companies routinely feed low-doses of antibiotics to healthy food-animals. Decades of research have shown that this kind of misuse leads to an increase in superbugs. The findings of Slaughter’s survey add to consumer’s ability to buy antibiotic-free food and use the power of their pocketbook to stop the growing threat of superbugs. More on the survey [is available here](#)

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